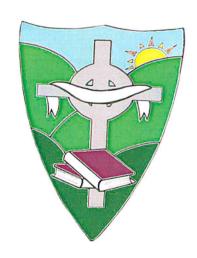# St Mary's Primary School Rathfriland

Anti- Bullying Policy

2023

15/06/23

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Introduction and Statement

At St Mary's Primary School, we believe all forms of bullying behaviour are unacceptable. We believe that all pupils have the right to learn in a safe secure and supported environment so that the personal, academic and social development of our children is realised. We repudiate bullying behaviour of any form both towards or from any member of our school community.

Context

The policy is informed by the legislation and guidance below:

The Legislative Context:

- The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016
- The Education and Libraries Order (Northern Ireland) 2003 (A17-19)
- The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010
- The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Health and Safety at Work Order (Northern Ireland) 1978

The Policy & Guidance Context

- The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 Statutory Guidance for Schools and Boards of Governors (DE, 2019)
- Pastoral Care in School: Promoting Positive Behaviour (DE, 2001)
- Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools: A Guide for Schools (DE, 2017)
    - Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (Dept. of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2016)
    - Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Policies and Procedures (SBNI, 2017)

The International Context

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

At St Mary's P.S we take the legal definition of bullying from "The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016":

The key points to note are:

- The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016:
    - Provides a legal definition of bullying.
    - Places a duty on the Board of Governors to put in place measures to prevent bullying behaviour, in consultation with pupils and parents.
    - Requires schools to record all incidents of bullying behaviour and alleged bullying incidents.
    - Sets out under which circumstances this policy should be applied, namely:
        - In school, during the school day
        - While travelling to and from school
        - When under control of school staff, but away from school (eg. school trip)
        - When receiving education organised by school but happening elsewhere
    - Requires that the policy be updated at least every four years.

- The Education and Libraries Order (NI) 2003, requires the Board of Governors to:
    - 'Safeguard and promote the welfare of registered pupils' (A.17)

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out every child's right to:
    - Be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation. (A.19)
    - Be protected from discrimination. (A.2)
    - Express their views, in a supported and accessible way, on issues that affect them, and to have their opinions taken seriously. (A.12)
    - Education. (A.28)

Ethos & Principles

At St Mary's P.S we have based our Anti- Bullying Policy on our school ethos and principles which underpin everything that we do.

- We are committed to a society where children and young people can live free and safe from bullying.

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- We believe in a society where bullying is unacceptable and where every child and young person is safe and feels safes from bullying.
- We believe that every child and young person should be celebrated in their diversity.
- We are committed to a preventative, responsive and restorative anti-bullying ethos across the whole school.
- We value the views and contributions of children and young people, we will actively seek these views and we will respect and take them into account.
- We understand that everyone in our school community has a role to play in taking a stand against bullying and creating a safe and welcoming environment for all.

Consultation and Participation

At St Mary's P.S we have developed our Anti – Bullying Policy in consultation with registered pupils and their parents/carers, in compliance with the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016.

This took the form of:

- Questionnaires for Key Stage 1 and 2 Pupils
- Consultative class based activities for Foundation pupils
- Consultation with Pupil Council
- We consulted with parents through a Questionnaire
- We worked with staff member through engagement in writing the Anti—Bullying Policy.

What is Bullying?

In St Mary's P.S we take the legal definition of bullying from "The Addressing Bullying in School Act (NI) 2016

Addressing Bullying in Schools Definition of "bullying":

(1) In this Act "bullying" includes (but is not limited to) the repeated use of :

(a) any verbal, written or electronic communication,

(b) any other act, or

(c) any combination of those, by a pupil or a group of pupils against another pupil or group of pupils, with the intention of causing physical or emotional harm to that pupil or group of pupils.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), "act" includes omission.

While bullying is usually a repeated behaviour, there are instances of **one- off incidents** that the school will consider as bullying. These incidents will be assessed using the following criteria:

- severity and significance of the incident
- evidence of pre-meditation
- impact of the incident on individuals (physical/emotional)
- impact of the incidents on wider school community
- previous relationships between those involved
- any previous incidents involving the individuals
- Cognitive and SEN ability, imbalance of power, age and size

Any incidents which are not considered bullying behaviour will be addressed under the Positive Behaviour Policy.

- At St Mary's P.S the following unacceptable behaviours on the school premises when repeated, targeted and intentionally hurtful, may be considered bullying behaviour:

- Verbal or written acts
  - saying mean and hurtful things to, or about, others
  - making fun of others
  - calling another pupil mean and hurtful names
  - telling lies or spread false rumours about others
  - try to make other pupils dislike another pupil/s

- Physical acts
  - Hitting
  - kicking
  - pushing
  - shoving
  - material harm, such as taking/stealing money or possessions or causing damage to possessions

- Omission (Exclusion)
  - Leaving someone out of a game
  - Refusing to include someone in group work

- Electronic Acts (On our school premises)

- o Using online platforms or other electronic communication to carry out many of the written acts noted above
- o Impersonating someone online to cause hurt
- o Sharing images (eg. photographs or videos) online to embarrass someone

Whilst these lists are not exhaustive, behaviours which fit with the definition may be considered bullying behaviour.

There may be times when various motivation/s lie behind the bullying behaviour including those named in the 2016 addressing Bullying in Schools Act. These include but are not limited to:

- Age
- Appearance
- Breakdown in peer relationships
- Community background
- Political affiliation
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation

- Race
- Religion
- Disability / SEN
- Ability
- Looked After Child status
- Young Carer status

Bullying is an emotive issue, therefore it is essential that we ensure we use supportive, understanding language when discussion these matters. For that reason we will not refer to a child as 'a bully', nor will we refer to a child as 'a victim'. Instead, we will refer to the child b describing the situation surrounding that child, for example:

- A child displaying bullying behaviours
- A child experiencing bullying behaviours

We encourage all members of the school community to use this language when discussion bullying incidents.

In determining 'harm' we define:

- Emotional or psychological harm as intentionally causing distress or anxiety by scaring, humiliating or affecting adversely a pupil's self-esteem.
- Physical harm as intentionally hurting a pupil by causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.

Preventative Measures

At St Mary's PS we aim to promote a strong anti- bullying ethos within our school and the wider school community

Examples of how we do this include but are not limited to:

- Raising awareness and understanding of the positive behaviour expectations, as set out in the Positive Behaviour Policy
- Promotion of anti-bullying messages through the curriculum eg. inclusion of age-appropriate material specific to individual subject areas related to bullying, positive behaviour and inclusion
- Addressing issues such as the various forms of bullying, including the how and why it can happen, through PDMU
- Involvement in meaningful and supportive shared education projects, supporting pupils to explore, understand and respond to difference and diversity.
- Through the preventative curriculum actively promote positive emotional health and wellbeing (eg. NSPCC Keeping Safe Programme, Healthy Minds Programme)
- Participation in the NIABF annual Anti-Bullying Week activities
- Engagement in key national and regional campaigns, eg Safer Internet Day.
- Development of peer-led systems eg. School Council) to support the delivery and promotion of key anti-bullying messaging within the school
- Development of effective strategies for playground management, eg. training for supervisors, zoning of playgrounds, inclusion of specific resources example play bus stops, training of P6 and 7 Buddies and provision of a variety of play options to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Focused assemblies to raise awareness and promote understanding of key issues related to bullying.
- Development of effective strategies for the management of unstructured times (eg. break time, lunch)
- Provision and promotion of extra- and co-curricular activities, aimed at supporting the development of effective peer support relationships and networks. For example sporting activity, creative arts, leisure and games, etc.
- Weekly Awards from The School Council to include PDMU Themes.
- E Safety leaflet/ policy issued to parents and on the School Website.

Preventative Measures on the way to and from school

Ultimately parents are responsible in ensuring their children behave appropriately on the way to and from school. In conjunction with this we at St Mary's take preventative measures to educate against inappropriate behaviour on the way to and from school. While many of the measures outlined above will support the development of an antibullying culture, there are a number of ways we further build on this including:

- Our school promotes a culture encouraging pupils to take pride in their identity as belonging to St Mary's PS. Pupils are reminded that their behaviour is viewed inside and outside of school as ambassadors for their school within the

community. This includes regular reminders of the positive behaviour expectations of pupils whilst travelling to and from school.

- Measures to empower pupils to challenge inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour of their peers during the journey to and from school.
- Promotion of key anti-bullying messages and awareness of behaviour expectations of pupils amongst the local community eg. local shops, cafes, service providers, residents, etc), including information on how to raise any concerns with the school.
- Appropriate deployment of staff to support the transition from school day to journey home eg. staff duty at school gate

Preventative Measures using Electronic Communication

Parents are ultimately responsible in ensuring steps to prevent bullying through the use of electronic communication amongst pupils. As the pupils in our school are under the age of 12, it is the responsibility of the parents and guardians to be fully aware of what their child is doing online. Parents are also responsible for the age restrictions that are evident for social media applications. The schools "duty of care" will not be used in situations where pupils behave inappropriately on platforms as this is the responsibility of the parents. However, school has the authority to take steps to prevent bullying through the use of electronic communication amongst pupils during term time, where that behaviour is likely to have a detrimental effect on the pupil's education at school. If evidence of aspects of bullying become integrated into school life we will play an active role.

It is the requirement of parents to keep their child safe from Internet bullying whilst at home. In conjunction with this we take preventative measures to educate against online bullying by:

- Addressing key themes of online behaviour and risk through PDMU including understanding how to respond to harm and the consequences of inappropriate use.
- Participation in Anti-Bullying Week activities.
- Engagement with key statutory and voluntary sector agencies eg. C2k, PSNI, Public Health Agency, Safeguarding Board for NI e-Safety Forum, to support the promotion of key messages.
- Participation in annual Safer Internet Day and promotion of key messages throughout the year.
- Development and implementation of robust and appropriate policies in related areas eg Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy,C2K Filtering and Blocking, Mobile Phone Policy, Connected Devices Policy, etc

Responsibility

Everyone has responsibility for creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all members of the school communities.

Everyone in the school community, including pupils, their parents/carers and the staff of the school are expected to respect the rights of others to be safe.

Everyone has the responsibility to work together to:

- foster positive self-esteem
- behave towards others in a mutually respectful way
- model high standards of personal pro-social behaviour
- be alert to signs of distress* and other possible indications of bullying behaviour
- inform the school of any concerns relating to bullying behaviour
- refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying behaviour, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity.
- refrain from retaliating to any form of bullying behaviour
- intervene to support any person who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so.
- report any concerns or instances of bullying behaviour witnessed or suspected, to a member of staff.
- emphasise the importance of seeking help from a trusted adult about bullying behaviour when it happens or is observed
- explain the implications of allowing the bullying behaviour to continue unchecked, for themselves and/or others.
- listen sensitively to anyone who has been bullied, take what is said seriously, and provide reassurance that appropriate action will be taken
- know how to seek support – internal and external
- resolve difficulties in restorative ways to prevent recurring bullying behaviour and meet the needs of all parties

Reporting a Bullying Concern

Pupils Reporting a Concern

Pupils will be given the opportunity to discuss with a member of staff that they trust, including teaching and non teaching staff.

Pupils can raise bullying concerns by:

- Verbally- talking to a member of staff
- By writing a note to a member of staff (eg. in a homework diary)
- By sending an email to a member of staff or to a dedicated email address
- By posting a comment in a 'worry box'

ANY pupil can raise a concern about bullying behaviour, not just the pupil who is experiencing this behaviour. Through the preventative work taken forward under Section 6, our message focuses on 'getting help' rather than 'telling'. As such, all pupils should be encouraged to 'get help' if they have a concern about bullying that they experience or is experienced by another.

Parents/Carers Reporting a Concern

Parents are encouraged to raise concerns about alleged bullying behaviour with the school at the earliest opportunity. Parents/ carers are reminded of the need to encourage their child/ren to react appropriately to bullying behaviour and not to do anything to retaliate or to "hit back".

- In the first instance, all bullying concerns should be reported to the Class Teacher or any member of the Teaching Staff.
- Where a parent is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken to prevent further incidents, the concern should be reported to the Principal.

Where the parent remains unsatisfied that the concern has been appropriately responded to, the school's complaints procedure should be followed. This will involve making a formal, written complaint to the Board of Governors. Please see our School's Complaints Procedure which is available on the School website.

All reports received from pupils and or parents will be responded to in line with the Anti-Bullying Policy and feedback will be made to the person who has made the report. No information about action taken in relation to a pupil can be disclosed to anyone other than the pupil and his/her parents.

It is important to note that reports of alleged bullying behaviour will be kept in line with the legal requirements set out in the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act 2016.

While the majority of reports of bullying concerns will come from pupils and their parents/carers, the school must be open to receiving such reports from anyone.

Responding to a Bullying Concern

The processes outlined below provide a framework for how the school will respond to any bullying concerns identified.

- Using the NIABF Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource, the member of staff responsible shall...
- Clarify facts and perceptions
- Check records (SIMS/BMM)
- Assess the incident against the criteria for bullying behaviour
- Identify any themes or motivating factors
- Identify the type of bullying behaviour being displayed
- Identify intervention level
- Select and implement appropriate interventions for all pupils involved, including appropriate interventions, consequences and sanctions not listed in the Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource
- Track, monitor and record effectiveness of interventions
- Review outcome of interventions
- Select and implement further intentions as necessary

Our main focus is on a restorative approach to responding to bullying behaviour. Our interventions aim to resolve the concern and restore the wellbeing of those involved. Intervwntions suggested in the "Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour" resource will be adapted when responding to the behaviour, resolving the concern and restoring the wellbeing of those involved.

Where appropriate school staff may implement sanctions for those displaying bullying behaviour. Appropriate consequences and sanctions are reflected within the Positive Behaviour Policy.

It must be noted that the information regarding any action taken regarding a pupil <u>cannot</u> be disclosed to anyone other than the pupil and his/ her parents/ carers.

Recording

As set out in the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016, a record of all incidents of bullying and alleged bullying behaviour will be maintained. The school will centrally record all relevant information related to reports of bullying concerns, including:

- how the bullying behaviour was displayed (the method)
- the motivation for the behaviour
- how each incident was addressed by the school
- the outcome of the interventions employed.

Department of Education guidance to schools encourages the use of the SIMS Behaviour Management Module for record keeping. Training from C2k is available to all school on how to best use this system. Within the policy, the school should detail within the policy how these records will be kept, for example:

Records will be kept on the online SIMS Behaviour Management Module, which is part of the C2k system in schools. Access to these records will be restricted and only provided to those members of school staff with a legitimate need to have access. .

All records will be maintained in line with relevant data protection legislation and guidance and will be disposed of in line with the school's Retention and Disposal of Documents Policy. Collated information regarding incidents of bullying and alleged bullying behaviour will be used to inform the future development of anti-bullying policy and practice within the school.

Professional Development of Staff

At St Mary's PS we recognise the need for appropriate and adequate training for all staff both teaching and non-teaching. This includes:

* staff are provided with appropriate opportunities for professional development as part of the school's ongoing CPD/PRSD provisions

- ✳ Any amendments /inclusions needed following training will be made to both the policy and its procedures -
- ✳ Safeguarding training opportunities are afforded to Governors and all staff – teaching and non-teaching
- ✳ CPD records will be kept and updated regularly

Monitoring and Review of Policy

To appropriately monitor the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of Governors shall:

- maintain a standing item on the agenda of each meeting of the Board where a report on recorded incidents of bullying will be noted
- identify trends and priorities for action
- assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at preventing bullying behaviour
- assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at responding to bullying behaviour

This Anti-Bullying Policy shall be reviewed as required, in consultation with pupils and their parents/carers every four years – on or before September 2026

Links to Other Policies

In the development and implementation of this Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of Governors has been mindful of related policies, including:

- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- E-Safety Policy & Acceptable Use of Internet Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy
- Educational Visits
- Staff Code of Conduct